

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EURE-00 USIE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00
PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01
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O R 011635Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5801
AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
USMISSION NATO
USDEL MBFR VIENNA

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 4434

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR PARM SALT UR US
SUBJECT: GROMYKO'S PRESS CONFERENCE: SOME IMPLICATIONS FOR U.S.-
SOVIET POLICY

1. WE ASSUME DEPT HAS EITHER FBIS TEXT OR TASS ENGLISH
TEXT OF GROMYKO'S EXTRAORDINARY, AND TO OUR KNOWLEDGE UNPRE-
CEDENTED, MARCH 31 PRESS CONFERENCE. EMBASSY'S COMPARISON
OF TASS PRAVDA VERSION (WHICH WE ASSUME IS VERSION FBIS
HAS) WITH TAPE OF ORIGINAL DELIVERY REVEALS A NUMBER
OF STYLISTIC CHANGES, BUT NONE OF SUBSTANTIVE IMPORTANCE.
EMBASSY HAS FOLLOWING INITIAL COMMENTS:

2. WHY THE CONFERENCE? THE PRESS CONFERENCE WAS PROMPTED
IN OUR OPINION BY THE CONCERN IN THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF
SOVIET LEADERSHIP THAT (A) THE SOVIET MESSAGE GIVEN TO THE
SECRETARY IN THE MEETINGS ("THE TRUE FACTS") WAS NOT GETTING
INTO THE WESTERN REPORTING ON THE MEETINGS, AND ALSO, (B)
THAT THE U.S. PROPOSALS IN SALT AND ON OTHER SUBJECTS
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SUGGEST THAT THE U.S. IS TAKING THE "INITIATIVE" AWAY FROM
THE SOVIETS IN THE FIELD OF DISARMAMENT. GROMYKO THEREFORE
SPELLED OUT IN GREAT DETAIL FOR HIS FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC
AUDIENCES THE BASIC RATIONAL FOR THE SOVIET REJECTION OF
THE U.S. PROPOSALS. HE WAS ALSO CONCERNED ABOUT "RUMORS"
THAT THE U.S. HAD PRESENTED A BROAD PROGRAM OF OTHER DIS-
ARMAMENT MEASURES WHICH THE SOVIETS DID NOT ACCEPT. IN

SHORT, HE WANTED TO ENSURE THAT THE ONUS FOR LACK OF PROGRESS ON SALT DURING THE VANCE VISIT WAS COMPLETELY ON THE U.S., BY REFUTING U.S. PUBLIC STATEMENTS IMPLYING THE CONTRARY. HE ALSO WANTED TO ENSURE THAT THE USSR'S GENERAL IMAGE AS THE LEADING FORCE IN THE DISARMAMENT FIELD WAS NOT TARNISHED. THIS CONCERN WAS PROBABLY HEIGHTENED BY A FEAR THAT, WHEN FULLY REVEALED PUBLICALLY, THE U.S. PROPOSALS WILL BE VIEWED BY MANY CIRCLES AS FAIR AND EQUITABLE.

3. WHAT WAS THE MESSAGE? THE MESSAGE WAS THAT THE SOVIETS WERE DETERMINED TO STICK TO THEIR NEGOTIATING POSITION AND THUS WERE IN EFFECT DEMANDING ANOTHER, MORE "EQUITABLE" APPROACH BY THE U.S. IF THE SALT TALKS ARE TO SUCCEED. GROMYKO CLOSED SEVERAL DOORS IN THIS WAY. FOR EXAMPLE, BY MENTIONING SPECIFIC NUMBERS (WHICH SECRETARY VANCE REFUSED TO DO IN HIS MARCH 30 PRESS CONFERENCE), GROMYKO SIGNALLED THAT DEEP CUTS WERE NOT AN ACCEPTABLE APPROACH IN SALT II.

4. ATTITUDE TOWARDS NEW ADMINISTRATION. THERE ARE SEVERAL SHARP COMMENTS IN GROMYKO'S PRESS CONFERENCE WHICH SHOW THAT HE AND THE REST OF THE POLITBURO HAVE NEW DOUBTS ABOUT THE NEW ADMINISTRATION. GROMYKO ACCUSED THE U.S. OF DISTORTING THE MESSAGE WHICH THE SOVIETS GAVE TO THE SECRETARY DURING HIS VISIT IN MOSCOW, AND OF MISREPRESENTING THE "BROAD NEW PROGRAM" OF ARMS CONTROL PUT FORWARD BY THE U.S. IN MOSCOW. THIS, WHEN COMBINED WITH THE DEPARTURE FROM THE VLADIVOSTOK ACCORDS LEAVES THE SOVIET LEADERS WITH DOUBTS ABOUT THE U.S. ADMINISTRATION. NONETHELESS, CONFIDENTIAL

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GROMYKO EMPHASIZES THAT THE SOVIETS ARE WILLING TO CONTINUE DISCUSSIONS AND TO GO TO GENEVA. BUT, GROMYKO IS TELLING THE U.S. THAT IN HIS OPINION IT IS THE U.S. THAT HAS CAUSED THE PRESENT PROBLEMS AND IT IS THE U.S. THAT WILL HAVE TO CHANGE ITS APPROACH IF THERE IS TO BE SUCCESS. NOT TO BE COMPLETELY NEGATIVE, GROMYKO DID CHARACTERIZE HIS MEETINGS WITH SECRETARY VANCE AS "NECESSARY AND EVEN USEFUL" AND HE ALSO ADDED SEVERAL MILDLY OPTIMISTIC AND CONDITIONAL STATEMENTS ABOUT FUTURE PRESPECTS FOR SOVIET-AMERICAN RELATIONS.

5. PROSPECTS FOR SALT. GROMYKO MADE A MAJOR RETROGRADE STEP BY PUBLICALLY THREATENING TO RE-INTRODUCE FBS INTO THE SALT II NEGOTIATIONS AND BY MAKING CLEAR THAT THIS WAS BEING DONE IN RESPONSE TO "THE LATEST AMERICAN PROPOSALS." IN DOING THIS, HE HAS ATTEMPTED TO PLACE FURTHER PRESSURE ON THE U.S. TO CHANGE ITS APPROACH AND RETURN TO VLADIVOSTOCK HOWEVER, WE INTERPRET GROMYKO'S FAILURE TO DENOUNCE CERTAIN ASPECTS OF THE U.S. PROPOSALS (E.G., CONSTRAINTS

ON BACKFIRE) AND HIS CAREFULLY SELECTIVE CRITICISM OF OTHER PARTS OF THE PROPOSALS (E.G., CRITICISM OF THE EXCLUSION OF CRUISE MISSILES IN THE DEFERRAL PACKAGE, BUT NO CRITICISM OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PACKAGE IN SO FAR AS IT REFERS TO CRUISE MISSILES), AS SIGNALS THAT DESPITE THE STRONGLY NEGATIVE REACTION OF THE SOVIETS TO THE TWO U.S. PROPOSALS, THEY REMAIN WILLING TO MANEUVER ON SPECIFIC ASPECTS PROVIDED THE GENERAL APPROACH IS CONSISTENT WITH THAT TAKEN BY THE FORD ADMINISTRATION.

6. GROMYKO'S DELIVERY. THE PERFORMANCE WAS A TOUR DE FORCE. GROMYKO SPOKE FOR ABOUT 90 MINUTES, WITH ONLY OCCASIONAL REFERENCES TO HIS NOTES. HIS DELIVERY WAS DELIBERATE, CAREFULLY PACED AND ENUNCIATED WITH VIGOR. DOBRYNIN, KORNIYENKO, TASS DIRECTOR ZAMYATIN AND INTERPRETER SUKHODREV SAT WITH HIM ON THE PODIUM, AND THE CAMERA OCCASIONALLY PANNED TO INDICATE THEIR PRESENCE. IN CARRYING THE CONFERENCE IN
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FULL ON MOSCOW AND, PRESUMABLY, NATION-WIDE TELEVISION, IT WAS CLEARLY AIMED TO HAVE MAXIMUM IMPACT ON THE SOVIET AUDIENCE.
TOON

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
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Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
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Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 01-Apr-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
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